

2017 SNA Volunteer Report



Photo credit © Jerry Newman

Where we worked in 2017

West Central
3 sites impacted
164 hours worked
10 acres covered
3 groups

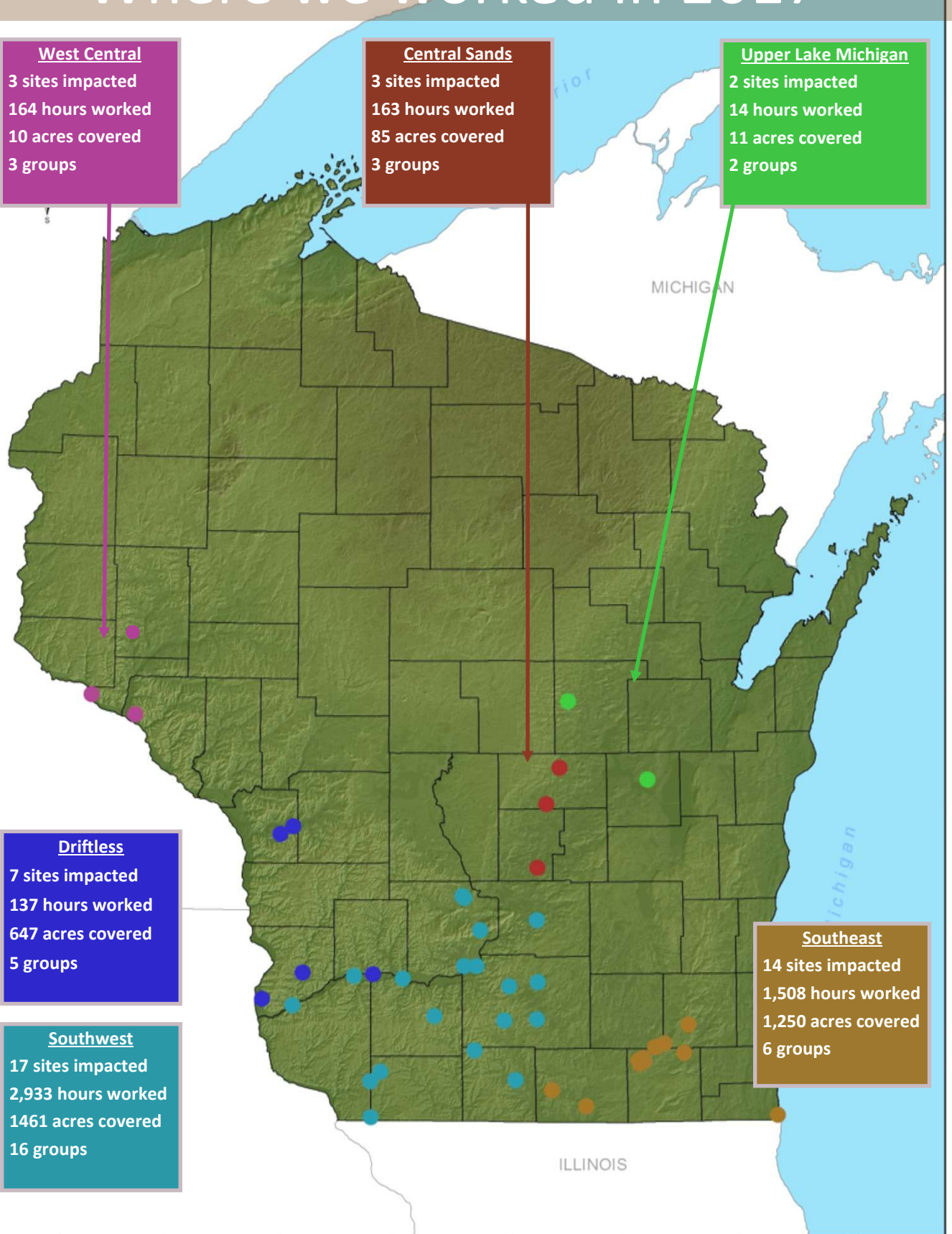
Central Sands
3 sites impacted
163 hours worked
85 acres covered
3 groups

Upper Lake Michigan
2 sites impacted
14 hours worked
11 acres covered
2 groups

Driftless
7 sites impacted
137 hours worked
647 acres covered
5 groups

Southwest
17 sites impacted
2,933 hours worked
1461 acres covered
16 groups

Southeast
14 sites impacted
1,508 hours worked
1,250 acres covered
6 groups



Thank you volunteers

Many volunteers grew their impact in 2017, bringing to 43 the number of State Natural Areas benefitting from their care. Their impact grew in other ways as well. We saw several examples of how SNA volunteers are tenaciously caring for their sites even as they recover from or are treated for serious illnesses. Their health struggles are hard to watch — cause for sadness, but also cause for celebrating the difference these people have made. If the illness eases for a time many have a renewed outlook and enjoy the physical labor of the ecological restoration we do. Not only are they restoring plant communities, they are restoring themselves. In some cases, they are giddy when they are able to get back at it.

I find wonder and inspiration in the stories of these people. Sometimes they run out of gas quickly, sometimes they aren't able to help much, need to take time off, can't do it. But this is OK, they care and are engaged as much as they are able. They teach all of us important lessons about staying engaged and enjoying life as much as we are able. When I do, it makes life good. The rewards of cutting buckthorn, cedar, and honeysuckle are there. Seeing new native plants sprout makes restoration worth it. Locating a patch of unusual plants full of seeds. Meeting someone new who is interested in nature.

Thank you for the inspiration! Let's continue to do this together and inspire each other! I hope the stories that follow will foster inspiration.

- Jared Urban

Volunteer Coordinator, SNA Program



2017 Summary

43 sites impacted

4,910 hours worked

3,463 acres covered

35 groups

Photo © Jonathon Beers

Steward of the year

The Chiwaukee Prairie Preservation Fund has played an integral role in preserving the largest remaining prairie and wetland complex in southeastern Wisconsin, from helping buy the first 15 acres of Chiwaukee Prairie in the 1960s to controlling garlic mustard and 24 other invasive plants there today.

We are glad to announce they have won the Volunteer Steward of the Year Award for 2017.

"Chiwaukee Prairie Preservation Fund and its leadership has been one of our cornerstones in protecting and conserving Chiwaukee Prairie for future generations," says Jared Urban, coordinator of the State Natural Areas volunteer program.

"Their commitment has only strengthened over the years, and especially so in the last 5-10 years with their increased efforts to recruit more volunteers, to engage more with partners to leverage funding, and becoming active in acquiring land," adds Sharon Fandel, the DNR Natural Heritage Conservation district ecologist who works with the group.

The Chiwaukee Prairie Preservation Fund has been working for more than 50 years on behalf of Chiwaukee Prairie, a one-time subdivision that in 2015 was named part of a wetland of international importance. That honor, and the preservation group's role, is described in the Wisconsin Natural Resources' magazine May 2016 story, "Ecological Treasures."

Fifty-two years ago concerned local citizens like Al Krampert and Phil Sander mobilized when the subdivision started to be developed, and in 1965 joined forces with The Nature Conservancy to purchase the first 15 acres of land within Chiwaukee Prairie. Two years later, Chiwaukee would be designated by DNR as a State Natural Area and as a National Natural Landmark by the National Park Service.

The Chiwaukee Prairie Preservation Fund was officially incorporated in 1985. Now, the group holds monthly work days. Many



DNR's Jared Urban and Sharon Fandel, far right, presented the Volunteer Steward of the Year Award to members of the Chiwaukee Prairie Preservation Fund including, left to right: Chad Heinzelman, Amy Duhling, Alan Eppers, Pam Holy and Nathan Robertson. Photo @ Mary Kay Baum.

of their volunteers are certified to apply herbicides, use chainsaws, and even assist on prescribed burns. Volunteers put in more than 1,000 hours of work in 2016, much of it removing or controlling invasive plants.

Key volunteers also work closely with NHC rare plant experts and Plants of Concern, a regional rare plant monitoring program of the Chicago Botanic Garden, to identify which species of rare plants need to be monitored and document and submit their results to DNR Natural Heritage Conservation officials.

More recently, starting in late 2016, the group has been working directly to acquire additional parcels when DNR has faced budget challenges precluding acquisition.

"CPPF grabbed the torch, stepped up to the plate, and chose to jump on several opportunities where we had interested landowners anxious to sell their land," said Fandel. *"They are truly our 'eyes and ears' at Chiwaukee Prairie when it comes to keeping us informed on various fronts, whether it be new invasive species populations, road or trail issues, and partnering opportunities. They are one of Chiwaukee Prairie's strongest advocates and, as such, are very deserving winners of the Steward of the Year Award."*

Where we worked in 2017

SITE	HOURS	VALUE	ACRES	VOLUNTEERS	COUNTY
Bass Lake Fen	13	\$314	3	1	Waushara
Belmont Prairies	21	\$507	1	6	Lafayette
Berg Prairie	6	\$155	49	1	LaCrosse
Beulah Bog	7	\$169	1	1	Walworth
Blue River Sand Barrens	63	\$1,648	3	18	Grant
Bluff Creek	370	\$9,073	15	68	Walworth
Cherokee Marsh	241	\$5,884	16	15	Dane
Chiwaukee Prairie	517	\$12,932	332	109	Kenosha
Clover Valley Fen	17	\$410	1	6	Walworth
Devils Lake Red Oak Forest	2	\$54	2	1	Sauk
Eagle Oak Opening	35	\$845	352	4	Walworth
Empire Prairies	111	\$2,727	2	37	Dane
Fern Dell	39	\$959	160	2	Sauk
Ferry Bluff	26	\$628	3	13	Sauk
Genesee Oak Opening	47	\$1,135	4	16	Waukesha
Hardscrabble Prairie	32	\$789	3	2	Lafayette
Hogback Prairies	85	\$2,173	516	12	Crawford
Ipswich Prairie	139	\$3,372	7	16	Lafayette
Karner Blue Meadow	6	\$145	4	2	Waushara
Kettle Moraine Oak Opening	48	\$1,176	329	14	Jefferson
Lacrosse River Trail Prairies	6	\$150	30	1	Monroe
Limery Ridge Savanna	6	\$147	50	1	Crawford
Lower Chippewa River	123	\$2,969	8	41	Buffalo, Dunn
Maiden Rock Bluff	41	\$990	2	9	Pepin
Mazomanie Oak Barrens	287	\$7,414	90	8	Dane
Messinger Dry Prairie and Savanna Preserve	198	\$4,958	20	42	Walworth
Millville Oak Woodland	8	\$193	556	1	Grant
Mirror Lake Pine Oak Forest	4	\$99	1	1	Sauk
Muralt Bluff Prairie (Stauffer Unit)	199	\$4,804	2	28	Green
Myklebust Lake	10	\$260	4	1	Waupaca
Observatory Hill	135	\$3,259	78	7	Marquette
Orion Mussel Bed	34	\$821	2	11	Richland
Oshkosh-Larsen Trail Prairies	4	\$101	7	1	Winnebago
Ridgeway Pine Relict	1022	\$25,276	90	39	Iowa
Rock River Prairie	19	\$459	49	4	Rock
Rocky Run Oak Savanna	241	\$5,932	6	26	Columbia
Smith Slough and Sand Prairie	24	\$579	494	2	Richland
Sugar River Wetlands	267	\$6,445	12	68	Dane
Undisclosed Site	250	\$6,035	148	5	Rock
Waubesa Wetlands	96	\$2,362	5	29	Dane
York Prairie	111	\$2,801	8	11	Green
TOTALS	4,910	\$121,147	3,463	500+	

\$ 121,147 of Value  **3,463 Acres Covered**

🕒 4,910 Hours  **35 Volunteer Groups**

Volunteers celebrate achieving 6-year goal

by Jan Axelson

On Sept 29, we celebrated the completion of six years of volunteer efforts to remove invasive phragmites (giant reed grass) from an area of high quality vegetation in the Cherokee Marsh State Natural Area (SNA). We will need to return periodically to remove resprouts, but the first and most time-consuming pass through the area is now complete.

We began the project in 2012 at the suggestion of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

(DNR)'s newly hired volunteer coordinator, Jared Urban. Stands of phragmites were becoming so dense that the diverse, original native wetland plants were being crowded out.



Volunteers celebrate on the final day. Photo © Jan Axelson

To remove the phragmites, we use the *bundle, cut, and treat* method. We gather stalks of phragmites into bundles tied waist high with biodegradable sisal twine. Using garden shears, we cut the bundles above the twine and apply herbicide to the exposed tops of the stalks.



Volunteer Jim Hughes cuts and treats phragmites in the SNA. Photo © Jan Axelson

We do the work in late summer when the plants are drawing sugars down into their roots and will draw the herbicide down as well. The stalks share a root system so even if we miss a few, the entire colony is affected. This method takes time but has virtually no effect on the surrounding vegetation. Volunteers who apply herbicide have Aquatic pesticide certification from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection. (cont.)

Volunteers celebrate achieving 6-year goal (cont.)

Since 2012, we've removed phragmites from 4 acres of wetlands. That's 170,000 square feet and over 50,000 bundles tied, cut, and treated!

The DNR designated 325 acres of Cherokee Marsh as an SNA because it contains an outstanding example of sedge meadow and fen plant communities. The sedge meadow has tussocks of grass-like, triangular-stemmed sedges and wildflowers such as Joe pye-weed, boneset, and turtle-head. A fen is a type of wetland fed by alkaline ground water and supports flowers such as fringed gentian, Kalm's lobelia, and bog goldenrod.

The SNA lies east of the Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park North Unit's trail system and is difficult to access due to lack of public access points, no maintained trails, and the difficult, tussocky and wet terrain. The best way to see the site is to join us on a work day. Or watch for an announcement of a guided tour, which we offer occasionally through the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin.

Our heartfelt thanks go to the dozens of volunteers who have participated in this project over the last six years. Special thanks to Jim Hughes and Tim Nelson for leading work days and helping out through the entire six years.



Fringed gentians grow in the Cherokee Marsh fen. Photo © Jan Axelson

What we did in 2017

Forty-one State Natural Areas benefitted from volunteers' time and energy in 2017. These are a few highlights that illustrate the type of work volunteers do. If you want to volunteer at these or other sites, visit dnr.wi.gov and search "SNA volunteers" to see work day dates and to sign up for notices of workdays. Or contact Jared Urban: jared.urban@wisconsin.gov or (608)228-4349.

Genesee Oak Opening: Jessica Quinlan has helped spearhead a partnership in 2016 with the Natural Resources Foundation and Kohl's who have both volunteered their time and sent in generous donations. In 2017 we took advantage of the rich savanna understory by collecting seeds to be planted on areas restored on other Southern Kettle Moraine SNAs. The hardy workers who showed during a sweltering heat wave in late September were great help. We also girdled aspen in the wet prairie in May during an extra hot day. Hopefully we'll find some cooler days in 2018!



Genesee Oak Opening. Photo © Kohl's



Ipswich Prairie. Photo © UW-Platteville Rec Club

Ipswich Prairie: During the academic year, the UW-Platteville Reclamation Club volunteers their time to do monthly management of Ipswich Prairie State Natural Area. The reclamation program at UW-Platteville, initiated in 1980, is strongly grounded in the field sciences. The Reclamation Club is designed to help students gain exposure to the environmental field and is a great way for students to grasp real world experience prior to graduation.

The club's main priority has been the removal and stockpiling of invasive species, mainly honeysuckle. The prairie, historically a railroad bed which unintentionally had occasional fires that maintained native plants, was designated as a State Natural Area in 1985. Members of the Reclamation Club have benefited greatly from acquiring state/federal training for chainsaws and applying it on the property. The opportunity to volunteer with the DNR to gain prairie restoration skills and to learn from staff on management practices is a wonderful experience at the college level. - Michelle Cliff

Bluff Creek: Student highlights- Students from Whitewater High School helped cut invasive brush in a small oak woodland between Bluff Creek and a wet mesic prairie. They collected seed in this productive prairie which will be spread in the cleared areas. The SNA volunteers are especially happy when students become partners in restoration. Earlier in the fall students from Whitewater Middle School became citizen scientists and tested Bluff Creek water velocity, chemistry and invertebrates. That workday was sponsored by the Kettle Moraine Land Trust and led by Nancy Sheehan from the Rock River Coalition, more of our partners in restoration. —*Ginny Coburn*



Whitewater High School Students. Photo © Ginny Coburn

Ridgeway Pine Relict: Year 2017 was the most exciting of my land restoration days! I believe we stepped onto every acre of the now 551 acres of the Ridgeway Pine Relict SNA for the first time. Thanks to the determination of Bill Carden and our newly trained sawyers, we continued moving steps closer toward restoration of open prairie at the Eastern entrance and South field off County H - more than once called, "the thickest jungle of woody invasives I've ever seen." But we were rewarded every time seeing the nearby Pine Relict cliffs we were protecting. We actually enjoyed exploring while pulling over a hundred contractor bags of Garlic mustard. We tried to follow the adage of being sure to remove the scattered small clumps of a few Garlic mustard plants before they took over. Well, that just made it more exciting to spread out and scout all of this SNA, including the large wetland and the high Great Blue Heron rookery.

But most exciting was working with new volunteers. Every few weeks a recent retiree would check out this SNA. Little did they know that they would soon become a new volunteer! Also new team of twenty-something techies were taken in by the Pine Relicts and came back again and again. Super valuable were the four adults who grew up exploring this land and could show us rock overhangs and features important to its survival. One teen volunteer wants to become a forester. Another teen found the importance of pacing her physical labor. Each volunteer brings their own special skills - whether it be how to stack brush piles, layout a brochure, ID birds, start a tricky weed wacker, or invent a better tip for dabbers. And we all learned to take a moment to breathe in what the pines whisper to us. —*Mary Kay Baum*



Ridgeway Pine Relict. Photo © Mary Kay Baum



Rocky Run

Thanks to help from the State Natural Areas Crew and volunteers, we managed to control the onslaught of knapweed and shrubby re-sprouts in the recently cleared areas. We were pleasantly surprised by the number of prairie species that had persisted in the shaded thickets, some of them for perhaps a decade or more. Bathed in sunlight, the native plants regained their vigor. Thick carpets of prairie smoke emerged in spring, and little bluestem, purple prairie clover, leadplant, gray golden-rod, and rough blazing star had grown up by late summer. Perhaps the most exciting moment of 2017 was finding a rare animal in an area cleared the previous winter. It was great to see that the animals were utilizing the new habitat so soon after restoration! —Jeff Lorch

Rocky Run: 2017 marked a year of major accomplishments at Rocky Run Oak Savanna State Natural Area. The volunteers continued to focus on restoration of critical rare animal habitat. In the winter of 2016, portions of a pine plantation were logged and volunteers (along with the SNA Crew) cleaned up slash and seeded the area. Additional seed was collected in the fall for planting in 2018. Volunteers also worked to remove thick stands of cedar, autumn olive, honeysuckle, and buckthorn to expand the acreage of sand prairie at the site.



Rocky Run

As a kid growing up, I've always admired wildlife and nature. Now, I am double majoring in zoology and conservation biology at UW Madison. I wanted to explore many volunteer and work options that are associated with conservation. Through the DNR, I've taken a step further by volunteering at Rocky Run State Natural area to remove invasive brush within the winter period. **I have learned so much about land management and gotten a larger picture of ecology.** I've definitely enjoyed (and still am) my time participating in projects such as this and sharing this experience with other volunteers! - *Morganne Boppel (new volunteer)*

New sites and volunteers in 2017

Blue River Sand Barrens and Orion Mussel Beds: We are partnering with FLOW (Friends of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway) to restore a couple of sites adjacent to the Lower Wisconsin.

At Blue River Sand Barrens we are cutting and treating pines, oaks, and brush in a strip of land adjacent to a wetland where many turtles migrate up to lay eggs. This strip has never been managed and will improve the quality of an already high quality site.

Orion Mussel Beds is known for its native American effigy mounds. We are restoring the area surrounding the mounds by removing brush and brambles.

Kwik Trip: Kwik Trip is helping us get more brush on the fire by donating \$25 gas cards for volunteer saw and brushsaw fuel.



Orion Mussel Beds



Kwik Trip gift cards



Volunteer crew at Blue River Sand Barrens

My wife and I have admired Wisconsin's varied natural beauty all our lives. Our efforts over a few years to restore a piece of woods we own in the Driftless area gave us an appreciation for the difficult work involved. After all, the invasive brush will not remove itself. When I recently retired I learned of the State Natural Areas Program – restoring some of the last vestiges of Wisconsin's native landscape. **Volunteering has provided the opportunity to participate in that work with like-minded volunteers and learn a great deal about native plant communities from knowledgeable DNR staff.** I am grateful the volunteer program is growing. - Dick Zalewski (new volunteer)

Why we do what we do (by new volunteers)

We volunteer at the Ridgeway Pine Relict, north of Ridgeway. **We were born and raised on this land and we played and explored in these hills as boys.** Of course, that was back when we didn't really realize how lucky we were and just how special this place can be. We work with this crew because we are thrilled with the idea that our beautiful Relict could live on for future generations to enjoy. We're a little older now, but we still enjoy playing in the woods. —*Tom and Bob Scheidegger (new volunteers)*



Tom Scheidegger. Photo @ Mary Kay Baum



Sugar River Wetlands

Upon retirement I was lucky enough to move back to the central sands area that I grew up in. Although still beautiful, I noticed a change in the landscape. I missed seeing the plants, animals and insects of my childhood. Was this a natural shift or was something else occurring? I decided I needed to learn more.

I enrolled in the Wisconsin Master Naturalist program at Hartman Creek State Park and it changed my life. It threw me into a world I never realized I had such passion for. The **volunteer program has led me to many different state natural areas and I have experienced so many wonderful people, plants and animals** while battling invasives and helping to restore Wisconsin's beautiful heritage. I want my great grandchildren to watch in amazement as the karner blue flutters among the lupine and see the beauty hidden in the forest floor. I have returned to what I love and it is a joy to have the opportunity to protect it with such a wonderful group of dedicated volunteers. —*Barb Schmidt (new volunteer)*



Annual Picnic. Photo © Mary Kay Baum



Maiden Rock Bluff



Hogback Prairie

Join us! We are always looking for more help caring for Wisconsin's great natural heritage. If interested please contact:

Jared Urban- jared.urban@wisconsin.gov

(608)228-4349

3911 Fish Hatchery Rd Fitchburg, WI 53711

Discover how you can help care for our natural heritage. Go to dnr.wi.gov and search "SNA volunteers"

